The Honorable Mike Johanns
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

NOV 20 2012

Dear Senator Johanns,

Thank you for your letter of October 29 regarding the events of September 11 in Benghazi. We appreciate your interest in understanding the events surrounding the attack on our mission. We share your commitment to find ways to prevent such attacks from happening again. Nobody will hold our Departments more accountable than we hold ourselves; we served alongside Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Glen Doherty, and Tyrone Woods.

We must do all we can to best ascertain the facts surrounding the attack in Benghazi. Neither the American public, nor the memories of those lost in the attack, is well served by the release of flawed conclusions not fully vetted against the facts at hand. We believe it is critical that all parties reserve judgment until a full accounting of the facts can be appropriately provided. It is for this reason that our agencies continue to work tirelessly, alongside our interagency partners, to compile the most accurate possible picture of the events of September 11. We have several different efforts concurrently underway in this regard.

Pursuant to statute, Secretary Clinton has convened an Accountability Review Board (ARB), led by Ambassador Thomas Pickering, which is examining whether security systems and procedures in Benghazi were adequate given the threat environment, whether those systems and procedures were properly implemented, and any lessons we can learn for the future. Should the ARB meet its target for completing its review, it will report its finding in December. The Department of State intends to share our response to the ARB's findings with Congress, and would encourage you to withhold any final conclusions about the Benghazi attack until you have an opportunity to review that information.

Additionally, we are taking immediate steps to bolster security and readiness. We have dispatched several joint Department of Defense and Department of State assessment teams to evaluate the security of high-threat posts to determine whether there are other improvements needed in light of the evolving security challenges we now face. We expect to complete our joint efforts shortly; and, the outcomes will help us determine whether additional steps need to be taken to augment our security profile in these types of high threat environments.

Our Departments continue to cooperate closely with our interagency partners in order to ensure a whole of government response to the Benghazi attack. To that end, we are coordinating with the intelligence community as they work with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) to clarify what information was available prior to, during, and after the attacks in Benghazi, and providing support to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for its investigation into who perpetrated the attack.

Finally, we continue to cooperate with Congressional requests for information wherever possible, including by providing extensive documents to Congressional committees as requested, participating in multiple briefings for Members and staff in the Senate and House, and Departmental participation in a public oversight hearing.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Congress has been and must continue to be a full partner with us in providing for the security of our diplomatic and development professionals overseas. We appreciate your commitment to the security of our overseas missions and look forward to working with you on this important effort.

Sincerely,

David S. Adams
Assistant Secretary of State
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Elizabeth L. King
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